

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 128501

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MNUC, OCLR, SP, US

SUBJECT:NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP (NPW) BRIEF STOPS AT ROTA

1. SUMMARY. DOD HAS PROPOSED A PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING
APPROVAL OF GOS FOR BRIEF STOPS AT ROTA FOR THE EXCLUSIVE
PURPOSE OF MATERIAL/PERSONNEL TRANSFER. CONCEPT WOULD RE-
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QUIRE AN EXCEPTION TO CURRENT PRACTICE FOR ROUTINE VISIT
REQUESTS. UNLESS EMBASSY PERCEIVES PROBLEMS, REQUEST YOU
RAISE MATTER WITH GOS AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

2. VISITS TO ROTA BY NPW, IN ADDITION TO THOSE ASSIGNED
TO THE SUBMARINE SQUADRON BASED THERE, HAVE BEEN OCCURRING
FOR ABOUT SIXTEEN MONTHS, AND AT A FREQUENCY THAT HAS MADE

THEIR DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE A RELATIVELY ROUTINE PROCESS. OVER THE MONTHS, CERTAIN PROCEDURES HAVE EVOLVED: VISITS TO ROTA SHOULD, WHEN OPERATIONALLY FEASIBLE, BE SEPARATED BY ABOUT 30 DAY INTERVALS; WHERE OPERATIONAL PLANNING PERMITS, VISIT REQUESTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED 60 DAYS IN ADVANCE, BUT AT LEAST 30 DAYS IN ADVANCE TO PERMIT PROCESSING BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

3. THE NAVY HAS ADVISED THE DEPARTMENT THAT NPW TRANSITTING NEAR ROTA, USUALLY ENROUTE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN FOR A NORMAL

DEPLOYMENT, FREQUENTLY REQUIRE A PERSONNEL OR MATERIAL TRANSFER. VARIOUS SCHEMES HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED IN THE PAST TO AVOID PORT ENTRY, SUCH AS TUG OR HELICOPTER TRANSFERS OUTSIDE TERRITORIAL WATERS. THIS PRACTICE HAS PROVEN TO BE MARGINALLY RELIABLE DUE TO SENSITIVITY TO ADVERSE WEATHER, AND IS POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS TO PERSONNEL EVEN UNDER THE MOST FAVORABLE SEA CONDITIONS.

4. ONE OBVIOUS SOLUTION IS, OF COURSE, TO SUBMIT A PORT VISIT REQUEST FOR A VISIT OF AN HOUR OR SO DURATION UNDER THE EXISTING PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES. THIS SOLUTION IS UNDESIRABLE SINCE IT MIGHT BE CONSTRUED BY THE SPANISH AS A QUOTE VISIT UNQUOTE IN THE SENSE OF THE 30 DAY SEPARATION; FURTHER, IT IS RARELY PRACTICABLE TO ANTICIPATE THE NEED FOR A PERSONNEL/MATERIAL TRANSFER MORE THAN TWO WEEKS IN

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ADVANCE. THE NAVY IS THEREFORE SUGGESTING A PROCEDURE SIMILAR TO THAT IN EFFECT WITH SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES (E.G. ITALY AND UK).

5. DOD HAS PROPOSED THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO OBTAINING GOS APPROVAL FOR BRIEF STOPS AT ROTA FOR PERSONNEL/MATERIAL TRANSFERS ON THE BASIS OF NOTIFICATION 10 DAYS IN ADVANCE. WE ASSUME GOS, OR MORE LIKELY SPANISH NAVY, FORMAL APPROVAL WOULD BE REQUIRED. SCENARIO FOR THE BRIEF STOP WOULD BE FOR THE NPW (USUALLY AN SSN) TO ENTER THE HARBOR, LIE TO WHILE TRANSFERRING PERSONNEL/MATERIAL TO A TUG OR SMALL CRAFT, AND THEN IMMEDIATELY RETURN TO SEA. EXCEPT FOR THOSE PERSONNEL EMBARKING/DEBARKING FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES, THERE WOULD BE NO SHIP'S PERSONNEL GOING ASHORE. ONLY UNDER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THE SHIP ACTUALLY MOOR AT A PIER OR ALONGSIDE THE TENDER, OR ANCHOR. THE ENTIRE DURATION OF THE SHIP'S PRESENCE WITHIN TERRITORIAL WATERS WOULD NORMALLY BE ON THE ORDER OF FOUR HOURS, AND PRESENCE IN OR NEAR ROTA HARBOR ABOUT ONE HOUR.

6. WE VIEW THE NAVY'S PROPOSAL AS REASONABLE, AND HOPE GOS WOULD AGREE THAT SUCH BRIEF STOPS CAN BE APPROVED AT A

LOWER LEVEL THAN PORT VISITS AND ON THE BASIS OF A SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED ADVANCE NOTIFICATION. THE NAVY RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO AVOID REQUESTING BRIEF STOPS DURING PERIODS OF HEAVY SURFACE NPW PRESENCE AT ROTA, AND WE WOULD ANTICIPATE NO DIFFICULTY IN THAT RESPECT. BY SEPTEL NAVY IS FORWARDING A BRIEF STOP REQUEST FOR USS SHARK (SSN-591) ON 2 JUL.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: UNLESS EMBASSY PERCEIVES PROBLEMS REQUEST YOU RAISE MATTER WITH GOS AT APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY. EMBASSY MAY WISH TO DRAW UPON THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS.

- US NPW PASSING NEAR ROTA OFTEN NEED TO EMBARK OR DEBARK PERSONNEL, OR TO RECEIVE PARTS OR OTHER URGENTLY REQUIRED CONFIDENTIAL

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MATERIAL. THE NEED FOR A TRANSFER IS USUALLY NOT KNOWN MORE THAN TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE.

- AT PRESENT, TO AVOID ENTERING PORT, SHORT NOTICE TRANSFERS ARE CONDUCTED BY TUGS OR HELICOPTERS WITH THE SHIP IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS. HOWEVER, ROUGH WEATHER CAN CAUSE CANCELLATION AND EVEN IN FAIR WEATHER, TRANSFERS AT SEA CAN BE HAZARDOUS.

- WE PROPOSE A NEW PROCEDURE: TO SUBMIT NOTIFICATION FOR AN NPW BRIEF STOP AT ROTA FOR GOS APPROVAL ABOUT TEN DAYS IN ADVANCE. THE ENTIRE DURATION OF SHIP'S PRESENCE IN SPANISH TERRITORIAL WATERS WOULD NORMALLY BE ABOUT FOUR HOURS, AND PRESENCE IN OR NEAR ROTA HARBOR, ABOUT ONE HOUR.

- BRIEF STOP SCENARIO: NPW WOULD ENTER ROTA HARBOR, LIE TO FOR BOAT/TUG TRANSFER, THEN RETURN IMMEDIATELY TO SEA. ONLY UNDER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THE NPW MOOR OR ANCHOR; AND EXCEPT FOR PERSONS DEBARKING FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES, NO SHIP'S PERSONNEL WOULD GO ASHORE. USN WILL AVOID BRIEF STOPS DURING HEAVY PRESENCE OF NPW SURFACE UNITS IN ROTA.

- WE WOULD SUGGEST THESE BRIEF STOP REQUESTS BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL AT A LOWER LEVEL THAN OUR ROUTINE NPW VISIT REQUESTS.

- THIS NEW PROCEDURE WOULD STILL ALLOW TIME FOR APPROPRIATE SPANISH AUTHORITIES TO REVIEW REQUESTS, BUT WOULD HELP TO REDUCE SITUATIONS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO INJURY TO PERSONNEL OR DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT DURING TRANSFERS IN THE OPEN SEA WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT FOR SUBMARINES. VANCE CONFIDENTIAL

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